DEUTSCHE AFRIKA-LINIEN
JOHN T. ESSBERGER

news

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Photo: Ortwin Mühr

Winter is here, not with severe frost and ice but with its usual darkness that is somewhat depressing up north. Luckily, there's artificial light. It has become very expensive due to high energy prices but provides some comfort nonetheless. This photo was taken in Hamburg's Köhlfleet harbour, the tank depot for alternative fuels, where the "Johann Essberger" (5,300 dwt) had berthed. The Köhlfleet is located near Lotsenhöft pilot station, where the port of Hamburg starts and the harbour pilots take over from the Elbe River pilots. One of the pilot vessels is just starting its shift. The brightly lit villas in the background are on the tall banks of the Elbe River, along the famous street Elbchaussee, here in Hamburg's district of Othmarschen. They are approximately half a mile away but the camera's powerful zoom has brought them much closer. The impressive villa in the middle was built in 1904 for Carlos Pedro de Freitas, then one of Hamburg's most renowned shipowners. Just six years later, de Freitas' shipowning company was bankrupt. The beautifully lit building has meanwhile been restored to itsformer glory.

Full steam ahead in China – News from the construction site

Essberger Ship Management team pays a visit to the Dingheng Shipyard and tells us about the current situation of our 6,600 dwt chemical tanker newbuilding project/ by Johan Isaksen

After several attempts to visit China, in September/October Newbuilding Manager Dejan Golub and myself, Director of Essberger Ship Management, were finally able to visit China Merchants Jingling (Yangzhou) Dingheng Co Shipyard, which is building our four sophisticated chemical tankers with deliveries scheduled for 2023 and 2024. This was our first visit to the shipyard since the contract was signed.

While the world is opening up and easing Covid restrictions, China is still maintaining their Zero Covid policy, which means strict entry requirements including a mandatory quarantine period on arrival. Upon arrival in Shanghai and completing entry formalities, Dejan and I were transferred to quarantine facilities, where we had to spend ten days of strict isolation.

Ten days in strict isolation

While this experience in China may not suit everyone, once they get into the routines, time passed quickly. The release was a great day, it meant freedom from the confines of the facilities as well as the monotony of eating rice three times a day! I can relate a bit to the feeling of when I was still sailing – excited and happy to sign off after months at sea. Being outside, however, did not mean escape from testing requirements every other day or check-in procedures on our mobile phone when visiting places. While the requirements were strict, they had a very efficient system that did not interrupt our normal day much. Most importantly, being outside meant it was finally time to visit the shipyard and their management, as well as our own people.

(continued on page 2)

In an environment dominated by political and economic challenges, our group of companies has improved well in the past year. The positive results of our joint venture E&S Tankers, the good charter earnings of our three container ships and the timely selling of the South Africa liner service to Hapag-Lloyd are a solid foundation to successfully keeping our course in a rather uncertain future.

We currently see a drastic downturn in container ship charter- and freight rates. Additionally, with the rise in container ship newbuildings entering the market in the coming years there will be further pressure on rates. As to E&S Tankers we are cautiously optimistic for the coming year to further establish our strong position in the European chemical tanker trade. We have recently sold a few older ships, and most vessels of our current fleet have just undergone major refits and modernisations. Our newbuilding project in China is progressing and we expect to take the first vessels into service in the coming year. They will enter a market that has to date not shown any signs of tonnage oversupply. The economic future of the market depends on how the conflict in Ukraine, a possible recession and the inflation will pan out. We are all in a state of change, both in our professional and private lives, as we are experiencing rapidly rising costs of living. I am certain that we will succeed in overcoming these challenges, in the same manner we have tackled all other challenges in John T. Essberger's almost 100-year history.

All of you, our staff ashore and at sea, I thank for your continuously loyal commitment and I wish you and your families a peaceful Christmas and a happy New Year, and please stay healthy.

Yours Eberhart von Rantzau

News from the construction site

(continued from page 1)

It was a great opportunity for Dejan to finally meet his Newbuilding team face to face, and since he had travelled to China a week prior to me, he had been able to witness the first keel laying, "Liselotte Essberger" on 27 September. Most of the blocks had already been produced for this vessel, as blasting and painting are ongoing before the blocks are ready for final inspection. Moreover, the erection of the hull is also in progress now. Similarly, I attended the steel-cutting of the last vessel in the series, "Heinrich Essberger", on 7 October. This event signifies that the construction of all the vessels is now officially in progress.

The next milestone for the first vessel, "Liselotte Essberger", will be the launching, which is scheduled for mid-January 2023. This will give a good indication of where we are with regard to the final delivery date of the vessel, presently scheduled for June 2023.

The progress of the project is good, although the shipyard is close to maximum capacity (they deliver around 15 vessels a year). But this also means that the shipyard must meet milestones for our project so as not to impact new projects that have not yet started. With regard to the shipbuilding scale in Asia, the yard is regarded as small despite its annual output. Their key focus over the years has always been to build small to medium-sized chemical tankers for international owners. They are focused on maintaining their reputation as "the yard to go to" for such vessels and therefore interested in learning from our experience and high expectations.

JTE site team including owner's representative, Director Ship Management, DNV representatives, shipyard management including General Manager Tiger Fang (Head of Shipyard)

Production is now picking up

It was also great to finally meet our owner's representative Lars Skjelbred, our site manager Martin Adams and the rest of the site team in action at the shipyard. They showed us around and gave us an opportunity to make some quality checks of some of the blocks. As production is now picking up, we are strengthening our site team. They play a key role in ensuring that our vessels are built in accordance with our technical specifications and high expectations.

The wealth of experience in supervising the construction of high-spec chemical tankers and knowledge to the shipyard reduces the overall project risk.

Meetings with top management in the yard were conducted, where progress and focal points were discussed. Moreover, it was also a good opportunity to get to know their people. A dinner with the shipyard was a good addition in this respect. Since we were unable to visit the yard earlier in the project, we have to deal with obstacles that appear during such complex undertaking via email and Teams calls. Although we have found solutions, Covid has undoubtfully resulted in prolonged problem-solving processes. The visit will positively contribute to a stronger and more efficient teamwork between the yard and JTE that will be beneficial to both parties. Together with our site team and the shipyard, we will find ways to build these state-of-the-art tankers that will be the next generation in fuel efficiency.

JTE will again visit the shipyard around February/March 2023, after the Chinese New Year celebration, which also means shortly after launching the first vessel. The outfitting stage that will follow will be a challenge, but we are moving head on with confidence that we are building great ships for the future. And the next trip to China will most likely mean similar entry requirements and a quarantine period.

JTE site team including owner's representative, Director Ship Management, and shipyard representatives including Vice President Cyril Chen

John T. Essberger site team at their preferred restaurant in Jinagdu City: Kim Jin (Steel inspector Link Marine), Eve Wang (Link Marine secretary), Preben Rasmussen (Director Link Marine). Martin Adams (Site office manager Link Marine), Dejan Golub (Essberger Ship Management), Safa Ismael (Director Link Marine), Wang Hui (Coating inspector Link Marine) and Lars Skjelbred (Essberger representative) – from left to right

It was quite an unusual job for E&S Tankers' "Dutch Emerald" (6470 dwt): she delivered a full load of drinking water from Rotterdam to the nuclear aircraft carrier USS "Gerald R Ford" taking supplies at anchor off the southern English coast. Here we see the tanker alongside, the size of a dwarf compared to the mighty vessel. The "Gerald R Ford" (100,000 dwt) was taken into service in 2017 and is the first of a new generation of aircraft carriers. 11 more of these vessels will join the US Navy in the years to come. With a length of 339 m and a beam of 78 m she carries a crew of 4,538. The building costs are estimated around 13 billion US dollars.

31 years with Essberger – 17 years on the same ship

Renato Santiago Rapusas, 52, motorman and fitter on board "Maersk Launceston", married with three children and living in Ilocos-sur, Luzon, Philippines – this is his story / by Johan Isaksen

Renanto Santiago Rapusas joined JTE in 1991 when he was 21 years old and has sailed on our tankers, cement carriers and container vessels. Since 2005, he has been a truly loyal sailor on "Maersk Launceston" (ex-"DAL Kalahari"). Mr Rapusas joined shortly after the vessel was delivered at Odense Shipyard, more specifically, at the first port where the ratings could join the vessel – Bremerhaven. He has not sailed on any other ships in between. This means that he has worked for JTE for 31 years and has spent the last 17 years on one vessel. Remarkable!

Always cheerful and happy to be on board, Renato Santiago Rapusas in the workshop of "Maersk Launceston" (ex-"DAL Kalahari), a place that he has felt at home for 17 years. He works eight to nine months every year and is a most valued member.

He has a wealth of experience

He has the know-how when it comes to his tasks. But even beyond that, he also has a wealth of experience regarding the vessel'specifics and because of that is a very valued crew member on board. The senior officers have consistently fought to keep him on the vessel. Every time our crewing office in Manila suggested to put him on other vessels, they would turn it down. The vessel was built ahead of her time and her complexity requires good competence, but also experience, which Mr Rapusas clearly has.

Although he is a motorman, due to his skills he also acts as fitter whenever required and occasionally when the vessel does not have a designated fitter. To say that this ship is his second home holds true, but Mr Rapusas laughs when I asked him if this is not his first home. He has spent about eight to nine months on board this ship for the last 17 years.

His brother, Rodrigo Rapusas, was a chief engineer on the container and bulk fleets but retired about seven years ago. His brother was the one who brought him to our company. He says: "I have never regretted this decision. I feel appreciated while working in this company and I hope I will have many more years here".

Johan Isaksen with Mr Rapusas. The head of Essberger Ship Management is happy to have loyal seamen.

He also thinks that he is still adaptable and can serve on other vessels if required, but he is very happy to stay here. Mr Rapusas has never been injured during his 17 years on the job. His motto "safety first" is truly lived by, and he says that our team supports and looks out for each other.

One of his hobbies is to play basketball and he sometimes plays on board together with his colleagues. In addition, he likes fishing – his biggest catch was an almost 20 kg blue marlin when the vessel was sailing between Europe and Africa.

E&S Tankers' Operations Desk: Link from shore to ship

A young and dedicated team at our Hamburg headquarters keeps the fleet running smoothly and makes sure the customers get their invoices and deliver accordingly/A portrait of the crew you are dealing with

It's not easy to get the busy OPs team all together. Missing in this photo, taken in the park of our Hamburg headquarters, are Svenja Behnke, Elena Thomson, Moritz Schernikau and Malte Ringe. So, see you next time! But present are, from left to right: Leonie Pries, Henry Widderich, Jan Eghøj (Head of E&S Tankers), Andre Soltau, Henning Lazarus, Manuel Borutta, Lars Klamt, Nicole Hildebrand, Timon Spreckels and Per-Christian Dettwiler

The Operations department is responsible for ensuring the smoothest possible operations of the E&S fleet and acts as the direct link between the planning command at the Hamburg headquarters and the crews on board the chemical tankers. This includes the following:

- Stowage plans in cooperation with the Chartering department and the officers on board
- Communication and coordination with shippers and brokers with regard to shipments
- Planning and execution of port calls in close cooperation with the crews on board and our agents in the ports
- Optimisation of the port stays and voyages as well as the solving of problems that could occur in this connection
- The Post-Fixture Desk is an important element of the Operations department and has the following tasks:
- Scheduling – entering voyages into the IMOS system
- Issuing freight invoices
- Calculating and issuing demurrage invoices
- Following up on invoices until final payment by the customers is made

Per-Christian Dettwiler is the Operations Manager and thus in charge at Essberger/E&S Tankers. He was born in Switzerland and grew up in Norway, where he completed his training as nautical officer. From 2007 to 2017 he sailed for Norwegian shipowner Odfjell as a deck officer on their deep-sea fleet. In 2017 he became a technical advisor/operator to bring practical experience to the Operations team and looked after several ships. Since 2020 he has been the head of the department.

Lars Klamt completed his apprenticeship with Essberger in 2013 to 2015. From 2015 to 2018 he studied business administration in Kiel, from 2018 to 2022 he worked as a vessel operator, chartering agent and port agent at Carl F. Peters and joined E&S Tankers Operations in August 2022.

Malte Ringe started as a trainee at John T. Essberger three years ago. The joint venture between Essberger and Stolt Nielsen was founded during his apprenticeship. He passed he final exams in summer 2022 and took the option to join the E&S Post-Fixture team thereafter.

Moritz Schernikau: After finishing high school he started and completed his apprenticeship at a small agency in Stade. He then began his career in the Operations department at E&S Tankers. Just recently he obtained his Bachelor of Science. He likes the dynamic atmosphere in the European short-sea tanker market. The quick changes in the schedules and with it "the opportunities arising for improvements in the fleet schedules" provide exciting challenges.

Elena Thomson started in shipping in 2008 as a trainee with a Hamburg-based shipping comopany, where in 2011 she continued to work as an exclusive in-house S&P broker and became a member of the Institute of Chartered Shipbrokers. In 2016 she joined the Essberger Chartering department as a broker. In March 2021 she became the mother of a daughter and in 2022 re-joined now E&S Tankers as part of the Post-Fixture team. She will soon have another baby but is looking forward to joining her team again.

Andre Soltau started his traineeship as a ship operational technical assistant in Flensburg, which during the shipping crises was followed by a second apprenticeship with Sartori&Berger. In 2015 he joined the Port of Kiel port operating department. In 2020 he completed his BA in Shipping, Trade and Transport and joined the Post-Fixture team of E&S Tankers in 2021.

Svenja Behnke started as trainee with United Chemical Transport in 2007. When the vessels were sold to JTE she joined the company as an operator and became a Bachelor Professional of Business. In 2015 she moved to the Chartering team and is now part of the PostFixture team and responsible for the Med trade.

Nicole Hildebrand has 20 years of experience in the chemical parcel tanker trade. She started as an operator and at the Charting Desk of UCT and in 2011 joined Essberger Tankers and became a Demurrage Analyst in 2013. With the start of E&S Tankers she became Team Leader of the Post-Fixture desk.

Leonie Pries started as a trainee at DAL in 2019 before switching to JTE a year later to work at the E&S Post-Fixture desk. Since mid-August 2022 she has been a full-time member of the Operations team.

Timon Spreckels joined JTE in 2019 as a trainee and was fully employed in the E&S Tankers Operations department as of January 2022.

Manuel Borutta started in shipping via a port agency apprenticeship at Sartor&Berger, Hamburg, and gained some experience as a cadet on a container feeder ship in the ARA range. In July 2022 he became an operator at E&S Tankers.

Record number of tankers docked in the year 2022

17 tankers: Why and where Essberger had so many jobs done

The year 2022 will be remembered as the time when the Essberger Ship Management team carried out the most tanker dockings ever: 17 ships in total. The reason for this feat was the expiry of their IOPP (International Oil Pollution Prevention) environmental protection certificates, which now require the installation of ballast water treatment systems (BWTS). In the case of "Anneliese Essberger", rudder damage had to be repaired but the vessel already had an IOPP certificate, and the "Dutch Spirit" was fitted with a BWTS without having to be docked.

Until early 2021, Essberger mainly used shipyards in Denmark (Soeby/Aerö and Fayard/Odense), Spain (Astander) and Portugal (Viana do Castelo) when it came to dockings. Due to rising costs for work that has to be done on a regular basis and, in particular, the BWTS installations, we started looking for shipyards whose quality is just as good but where prices are lower. The largest cost factor is the man-hours, sandblasting and recoating of the skin of the ships' hulls. Other key factors when we choose new shipyards are, as before, work safety for the shipyard staff, service workers and crews as well as the deviation costs, quality, weather conditions such as rainfall and humidity, which are important with regard to the coating work. We also need to prevent longer than expected docking times, so the shipyards need to be well equipped, have sufficient manpower and have efficient work processes in place.

The Covid-19 situation proved to be an exceptionally big challenge. All the various entry requirements, restricted travel options for our service technicians and crews, preventative measures to avoid infections, the unavailability of urgently required spare parts, and the heightened customs issues that had to be observed in Turkey led to off-hire periods. In 2022 the following four shipyards worked for us: Liepaja (Latvia), the NATAMAN group in Riga (Latvia), the BLRT group in Tallin (Estonia) and DESAN Shipyard in Tuzla (Turkey). The Essberger tankers overhauled in 2022 are "Charlotte", "Christian", "Patricia", "Georg", "Ellen", "Liesel", "Dutch Aquamarine", "Lisa", "Amalie", "Wilhelmine", "Helga", "Dutch Emerald", "Birthe", "John Augustus", "Cuno", "Coral", "Caroline", "Dutch Spirit" and "Anneliese". To follow in 2023 are "Roland", "Theodor", "Elsa" and "Philipp".

"John Augustus Essberger" in November with new paint job

Whereabouts

December 2022

Ship name	Master	First Mate	Chief Engineer
Agnes Essberger	Einar Bjoerkavaag	Denis Vlasov	Piotr Popiel
Amalie Essberger	Marcin Madry	Ruslanas Karpovas	Adam Szwajka
Anneliese Essberger	Theo Keizer	Pawel Pawlik	Pieter Pasterkamp
Annette Essberger	Waldemar Literski	John Christopher Domingo	Marian Cornea
Birthe Essberger	Jacek Borysiuk	Aleksejs Glinskis	Ruslans Lesciks
Caroline Essberger	Cornelis De Snaijer	Dominik Kazior	Ralph Huibers
Charlotte Essberger	Boguslaw Gajdowski	Andrejs Kivko	Lukasz Zeromski
Christian Essberger	Dan Tocitu	Mateusz Borysewicz	Miroslaw Jaworski
Coral Essberger	Lukasz Antczak	Piotr Adamski	Artur Kazimierz Gzella
Cuno Essberger	Mariusz Borek	Piotr Czajkowski	Marek Ptasznik
Dutch Aquamarine	Nicky Nicolaas Petrus Burger	Walter Bergsma	Steven Van Royen
Dutch Emerald	Alex Buren	Sjoerd Rijndorp	Saturnino Yuson
Dutch Spirit	Sander De Bos	Chris De Boer	Marinus Kroon
Ellen Essberger	Adam Krzyzykowski	Pawel Czarnacki	Miroslaw Szylobryt
Elsa Essberger	Stefan Grabowski	Edgars Seliverstovs	Roman Kulish
Georg Essberger	Henryk Bienenstok	Mariusz Piorkowski	Volodymyr Yurkevych
Gisela Essberger	Dariusz Swierkosz	Rafal Garbacz	Aleksey Plyasukhin
Helga Essberger	Arkadiusz Duczynski	Evgeniy Buzyrev	Olegs Cerepanovs
Johann Essberger	Enrique Lopez	Pawel Bula	Piotr Trusinski
John Augustus Essberger	Jaroslaw Spors	Waldemar Rzepka	Valeriy Bashkurov
Liesel Essberger	Antonio Petinga	Rafal Drezno	Ruslans Sokolovs
Lisa Essberger	Nicolaas Van Den Belt	Andre Steenbergen	Geert Sap
Maersk Launceston	Jaroslaw Maciuk	Mateusz Sierawski	Pavlo Polishchuk
Nordic Saga	Roar Kyvik	Marlon Bien Gonzaga	Zygmunt Dobrzyniewski
Nordic Sira	Ingi Hansen	Menard Responde	Fredrik Hollmen
Nordic Sola	Kent Baregg	Russel Derequito	Steinar Avløyp
Nordic Sund	Per-olov Persson	Michael Mabunay	Sergiy Gruby
Patricia Essberger	Grzegorz Kakol	Szczepan Pachula	Zoran Zambata
Philipp Essberger	Mareks Satkovskis	Antonio Jr. Ocampo	Vitor Belo
Roland Essberger	Piotr Bes	Adrian Kuzmicz	Piotr Kret
Theodor Essberger	Bartosz Selau	Blazej Czapiewski	Mikhail Borisyuk
Ubena	Ruslan Blazhyyevsky	Marek Kajdasz	Piotr Turski
Ulanga	Ioan-Cristian Cioban	Aleksandr Popov	Costica Tuca
Ursula Essberger	Albert Ten Wolde	Michal Pietryka	Gerlof Tijink
Wilhelmine Essberger	Marco Boshuijzen	Eriks Ciblis	Koen Schenk

Aus der Reederei-Familie

Jubiläen

40 Jahre

Ute Reineke,
E&S Tankers, 01.01.1983

25 Jahre

Ronardo Nunez Jacinto,
MTM, 17.11.1997

Rizal Jr. Butac Rosete,
PMP, 19.01.1998

Besondere Geburtstage

85 Jahre

Karin Nickel,
Pensionärin, 20.01.1938

80 Jahre

Sigrun Hartung,
Pensionärin,
06.12.1942

75 Jahre

Monika Seidemann,
Pensionärin, 06.01.1948

70 Jahre

Cornelia Hansen,
Pensionärin,
23.12.1952

65 Jahre

Jaime Subido Contawe,
CCK, 14.11.1957

60 Jahre

Oscar Hijastro Singson,
AB, 02.11.1962

Kees Zuidamn,
Finance/Accounting/Tax,
01.12.1962

Gleb Kolechkin,
C/E, 07.12.1962

Roberto Acula Rodriguez,
CCK, 03.01.1963

50 Jahre

John Bullanday Pascual,
CCK, 15.12.1972

Wir gratulieren zur Geburt eines Kindes

Ole-Christian Krenczak
Tochter Matilda, November 2022

Neue Mitarbeiter an Land

Freya Homeyer, *E&S Tankers*

Kelly-Claudia Kimmer,
E&S Tankers

Sergiy Radov, *Crewing*

Palmaille Office in Pre-X-Mas-Time, lights all over

75% of all incidents occur owing to poor decision-making. This is called "the human factor". After attending the safety seminar in Manila all seminar members are more aware of how to avoid incidents. Cheerful and optimistic they lined up for a photo – with Essberger's head of Ship Management Johan Isaksen in the middle (last row)

Work Safe Home Safe

Two seminars in Manila and a programme that will soon be officially launched/by Niall Mushat of Essberger Ship Management

With the restrictions of Covid-19 lessening, the take-up of vaccinations at a good level, it was fantastic to be able to hold two safety seminars in a week, with social contact while learning and a great atmosphere!

Our ambition is to have zero accidents. When analysing recent incidents within the company and industry it is evident that about 75% of incidents occur owing to poor decision- making, whether it is the person deciding to carry out a task in an unsafe manner and not identifying all the risks, consequences, non-compliance with rules, etc., or their colleagues accepting the decision in the knowledge or feeling that it is wrong and not speaking up.

Please speak up if something is wrong

This, we feel, is the area to be addressed. In other words, the mindset of all should be one of indentifying and challenging unsafe behaviour as well as sorting and reporting unsafe conditions.

In October we held two seminars in the training room of Transocean Ship Management in Manila, where the focus was on the effect of human behaviour on safety. Various topics such as decision-making, recognition of complacency, speaking up, care and a very lively afternoon leadership session delivered by Joy Fajardo of Guthrie-Jensen Consultants.

This training is part for our "Work Safe Home Safe" programme, which is currently being developed and will soon be officially launched. We believe the Human Behaviour programme will guide us along our path towards zero incidents.

The Manila seminars on 11 and 12 October for officers and 14 October for ratings were attended and lectured by Johan Isaksen, Director Essberger Ship Management, André Trommler (Crewing) and Niall Mushat (Ship Management) from the Hamburg office.

Niall Mushet from the Hamburg head office giving a lecture

Everybody listening to Joy Fajardo, COO of Guthrie-Jensen Consultants

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“Not a single IT-related emergency case on board in the past 8 years”

New IT hard- and software will be implemented in the entire Essberger fleet/ Lars Krugmann tells us what’s in the pipeline

Lars Krugmann, together with his colleague Daniel Gärtner, is responsible for the IT networks of the entire fleet, making available the planned maintenance and purchase system, the crewing management, nautical applications, e-mail, Internet applications and training sessions on board, and others. He started working for the DAL/JTE Group as a trainee in 2000, was then offered a full-time job by the IT department and is now a member of the Essberger Ship Management team. The rapidly evolving technological advances, especially in the field of IT systems and applications, mean constantly having to update the soft- and hardware, on board of ships that are far away and difficult to reach. What’s in the pipeline?

DAL/JTE NEWS: How many ships do you and Daniel Gärtner look after?

LARS KRUGMANN: Currently there are 35 ships in our fleet, each of which have six or seven workstations on board, including one that is mobile. In total, we’re talking about 250 workplaces and 70 servers. The servers have to run flawlessly every minute of the day, all year round. For security reasons all the systems are set up redundantly. Should there be a serious IT failure at sea, there’d be nobody on board who has enough detailed information or is sufficiently familiar with the subject matter. Our hardware is bullet-proof, so to speak, and we also have remote access to the systems if necessary. In any case, the system is highly reliable. In the last eight years, which is how long the current systems have been running, we haven’t had a single emergency case on board.

DAL/JTE NEWS: Technology has been evolving. Are the ships state-of-the art?

LARS KRUGMANN: We last replaced all our server hardware, which is identical on all our ships, in 2015. The operating life is normally five years, but we came to the conclusion that the hardware is very robust and also lasts eight years without any problems. That’s why we’re now preparing to replace the hardware in 2023. By the end of the year, all the ships will hopefully have been refitted. Concurrently with the hardware, the maintenance and security updates of the Microsoft operating system and MS Office will also expire. The latest software, in our case Windows Server 2022 and Microsoft Office 2021, will be rolled out at the same time as the hardware.

Good job: Lars Krugmann and Daniel Gärtner are taking care of the IT needs of the fleet

DAL/JTE NEWS: How do you perform such a huge task? That’s a lot of data. Will one of you have to join the ships on their voyages?

LARS KRUGMANN: No, we don’t have to go on board. A fleet-wide modernisation in such a short time wouldn’t be possible if we did that, because the fleet is too big and we are inundated with work to maintain the systems here at the office. So, it requires a lot of careful planning and testing the processes well in advance. All the systems will be prepared by us here at the office before they are shipped on board and we will equip them with automations so they can be installed via “plug & play” by the crews themselves. Of course, we’ll provide the crews with easily comprehensible illustrated instructions. Once all has been completed, the data will be extracted from the old system and reused in the new system, making it possible to perform a seamless changeover during ongoing operations. We’ll be doing the same with the newbuilds in China. They’ll be equipped with exactly the same hardware, which will be fitted by the shipyard in accordance with our instructions.

DAL/JTE NEWS: What improvements does the new hardware offer?

LARS KRUGMANN: The hardware is a lot smaller and will take up only a quarter as much space. It’s also much lighter. Instead of 30 kilos per server, the new hardware only weighs 3.5 kilos. The hard drives are much faster. We’ll have not only improved performance but even higher reliability.

DAL/JTE NEWS: What’s the next technological step?

LARS KRUGMANN: The Internet is still like the eye of a needle and that’s where we see the biggest potential for improvement. To ensure a good data connection, especially at sea and in highly frequented areas, we need higher bandwidth, in particular with regard to satellite communication, and we need a higher data volume at more reasonable prices. That’s what we’re working on at Essberger right now.

DAL/JTE NEWS: Are there any advantages for our crews on board?

LARS KRUGMANN: The use of modern fleet management software is a prerequisite to optimise our maritime logistics processes. A fast exchange of information between the crews of our ships, the operative departments here at headquarters and external service providers plays an increasingly bigger role. The continuous training of our crews at sea by means of e-learning is an important factor, too, and means having high-performance and reliable IT systems. In addition, every crew member will be granted a data volume of two gigabytes via 4G each week. This allows them to access the Internet with browsers and to use email for private purposes, thus making communicating with friends and family even easier.